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**House of Representatives  
State of Michigan**

**HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS  
SUBCOMMITTEES  
AGRICULTURE, MVC  
GENERAL GOVERNMENT, MVC  
TRANSPORTATION**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Sept. 17, 2008

## **Hansen effort links local farms, schools**

*Farm-to-School bills provide fresh food, education to students*

Local school children will be able to eat healthy and learn where their food comes from, all while boosting the area economy if a package of bills approved Tuesday by the House becomes law, announced state Rep. Goeff Hansen.

The House sent House Bill 6366 to the Senate, a measure sponsored by Hansen to expand the school bidding process so more local producers can provide food to area districts. The House also approved a Hansen resolution designating Sept. 18, 2008 as Buy Fresh, Buy Local, Select Michigan Day in support of the Farm-to-School package, which includes HBs 6365-68.

“These bills will promote Michigan agriculture, increase consumer demand, improve students’ access to locally grown foods and expand market opportunities for farmers,” Hansen said. “The keys to our state’s economic recovery and a healthy future for our children begin with initiatives like this, because it levels the playing field for our local growers and opens new markets that can boost their bottom line and help the local economy.

“The children benefit because they will eat healthy, fresh foods and learn more about the agriculture that sustains our way of life, and our lives.”

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HB 6366 would streamline the bidding process for school food administrators by increasing schools' small purchase threshold (SPT) food purchases to \$100,000, up from 20,000. The SPT is the dollar value above which competitive, formal bids must be obtained for purchases. Hansen said the higher amount will allow local farmers busy growing food to supply their products to the schools without becoming entangled in the often oppressive paperwork federal bidding can require.

Other measures in the package create the Select-Michigan Program to designate farm products grown, processed, or manufactured in Michigan; increase marketing opportunities for Michigan farmers; heighten public awareness of Michigan agriculture; encourage school food service directors and workers to implement Farm-to-School initiatives and use fresh, locally grown foods in their facilities; and assign Michigan Department of Agriculture staff to enhance Farm-to-School cooperation, job creation and connections between local farmers and school cafeterias and classrooms.

“Many segments of our society have become distanced from our agriculture heritage, one of Michigan’s top industries,” Hansen said. “By reintroducing our children to the farms and healthy foods, we will ensure Michigan remains a national leader in the ag industry and create our own local markets.

“Anytime we can produce, market, sell and purchase our products locally, it’s a good thing for our communities and the people who call them home.”

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